

THE Christian Messenger.

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VOL. I.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xxiii. 34.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

Answer to Z.

(Concluded from last number)

INDEED the very supposition that *the God of truth and without iniquity, who cannot look upon sin without abhorrence, hath decreed in himself from all eternity by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all the abominable wickedness that ever was, is, or will be committed by men*, and which he hath so positively and absolutely forbidden by his holy and righteous laws, ascribes to infinite purity and holiness such a horrible character, that I will not express it, because I believe Z. did not intend to degrade the divine character; but misled by the systems of human folly, as many very serious persons have been and still are, he has come forward with more zeal than knowledge.

But it may not be amiss to enquire what the scriptures teach respecting *Predestination*. Rom. viii. 29, 30. *Whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called*. &c. Ephes. i. 5. *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, (rather sonship,) by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; and verse 11, In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.* 1 Thes. v. 9. *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.* 2 Thes. ii. 13. *God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth.*

From this short view of the scripture account of predestination, we may perceive that it relates entirely to the

appointment of men to holiness and consequent happiness; but not one word of the appointment of men to commit wickedness, the reward of which is misery.

With this remark, I take leave of Z. earnestly wishing that his understanding may be enlightened by the word and spirit of God; instead of being entangled in darkness by the dogmas of men, who, professing themselves to be wise, have become fools.

T.

—O—

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

"That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die."

THE death of Jesus did not take place among a few of his particular friends; had it been thus, men might well doubt the truth of it; they might say that his friends had given him some narcotic and imposed his pretended death on the credulity of mankind. On the contrary, it was attended with the publicity of an execution, and by the sentence of his enemies, those most anxious about his death, who would not yield up his body whilst there was any prospect of life.

When the soldiers were certain of his death, he was taken to the tomb, the coldness of which would extinguish any latent principle of existence. The high priests knew of the prophecy, that on the third day he should rise again, and therefore took the most effectual way of guarding against it; they went to Pilate and said "Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead; so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, ye have a watch, go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting the watch."

As to the report of his disciples stealing him, it is very improbable that the whole guard should be at the same time asleep, and should remain so, notwithstanding the noise made by the removal of the stone. Besides, the disciples had dispersed and left him when he was taken, would they then venture to steal the body in face of a guard? But admit they did, of what possible use could the dead body be to them? its absence from the tomb would not prove its resurrection.

It may be said, if the body had putrified and then revived, we should have a stronger proof of its resurrection. The Jews of that day would not have believed, had this even been the case. Corruption had set her seal on the corpse of a Lazarus, yet when the chambers of death resounded with Lazarus come forth, from the lips of him who spake as never man spake, the tomb yielded up its tenant, and death was conquered; for all this the Jews despised, disbelieved the fact; and had the body of our Saviour undergone the same process, we of the present day might assert that he did not actually die, but the long time he was said to have remained in the tomb, was only the period requisite for a recovery from his wounds, in order to cheat into a belief of his rising from the dead.

He was crucified on Friday; on Sunday he walked to Emmaus, about eight miles from Jerusalem. Now from the wounds in his feet, which at this time would be in a state of inflammation, it would have been impossible for him to have walked that distance unless by a miracle, and if we must resort to this in one case, why not in the other? Two females went to the tomb of their master, the angel of the Lord rolled the stone from the door, and said unto them, "Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead." To the honour of the female

sex, they were commissioned the first preachers of immortality after the death of their Saviour. As they went to execute the duty, Jesus appeared unto them on the road, and said unto them, "Go, tell *my brethren*, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me:" they did so. Here the latter were prepared, it was no sudden thing, and if there was any deception, they could detect it. He after this meets the eleven, "And when they saw him, they worshipped him, *but some doubted*;" this doubt was necessary. If there had been none, men of the present day might say, Aye! it was well managed, his disciples knew how to hatch a scheme; they *all* believed at first glance. When men doubt a thing, it is generally the case that they will examine. We find this unbelief still stronger in Thomas: he says, "Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, *I will not believe*." How shall this man be convinced? he requires ocular evidence, and this corroborated by the sense of touch—well he shall have it: "And after *eight* days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them; then came Jesus, the door being shut, and stood in the midst and said, Peace be unto you, then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing; and Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God!"

What more proof is wanting? Why, says the unbeliever, you have told us of those who were interested in the concern, who were his disciples and friends, let us hear something from the other side.—There was a man who opposed the religion of Jesus, his talents were great, and his zeal in what he thought truth, unbounded; he thought that by persecuting Christians, he was doing God service; he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and on the way to seize and bind the adherents of Christ; on the road Jesus appeared unto him, he believed and became a promulgator of life eternal, the *gift* of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Now this man certainly was not prejudiced in favour of the resurrection; it would take the most undeniable evidence to convince

such a one of the truth of it; and when we consider the sacrifice of pride made by Saul of Tarsus, we should believe the doctrine preached by the Apostle Paul.

Further than this, it was proclaimed in public as a fact, with which the multitude were acquainted, and which there could not deny, at the day of Pentecost, there were present, devout men out of every nation under heaven, who heard the language of their respective homes spoken to them by the disciples to the multitude. Peter addressed them by saying, "Jesus of Nazareth, a *man* approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, *as ye yourselves also know*; him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by *wicked hands* have crucified and slain, whom *God hath raised up*." If this had not been the correct account, the imposture would have been detected. Peter indeed did not tell the mode of the resurrection, but spoke of it as a fact well attested, and which nobody would deny; he addressed them in the same manner as the orator of the day would an American audience on the fourth of July, viz. speak of the benefits arising from an emancipation, without descending to prove a fact as well known as any in the universe. If he did rise from the dead, why did not all believe it? Had the Jews of that period all believed it, we of this age would put less credit in it; we would say, why it was some policy in the nation to adopt a new religion; but though all did not believe, the number is amply sufficient to establish the truth. The people of that period were, like ourselves, men; do we not see at this time, boast as we will of our enlightened state, that a doctrine, if it bears but the title *new*, is rejected without examination, and however true, is despised, if the learned divines do not set their seals and tell people it is from God. Should we then wonder that the resurrection was not believed, when the High Priests and Pharisees denounced it? Could the people sacrifice their spiritual pride, for a religion which was humble, unfashionable and NEW?

Does there exist the being who believes in no future state?

"There live alas! of heav'n directed mien,
Of cultur'd soul and sapient eye serene,

Who hail thee, man! the pilgrim of a day,
Spouse of the worm and brother of the clay.
Frail as the leaf in autumn's yellow bower,
Dust in the wind, as dew upon the flower,
A fr endless slave, a child without a sire,
Whose mortal life, and momentary fire
Light to the grave his chance created form,
As ocean wrecks illuminate the storm."

Mark the philosopher at the grave, he mourns that the hand of death has taken away a companion bound to him by the firmest ties of social love, he endeavours to console himself by reflecting that the ever shifting scenes of life can no more visit the departed with trouble or dismay; that the great Soul of the universe has acted with man, as with the myriads of the vegetable kingdom, like the grass he is cut down, and his blooming honours fade like the flower of the field; the mineral remains unchanged by ages, but its organization is less complex, and it receives in duration what it loses in quality. Of how much is such a mourner deprived? He sees that mansion, once magnificent, once towering in grandeur, now sunk in ruins, and its glory departed; he endeavours to forget an irreparable loss, but cannot be guided by that needle which points to a building not made with hands, which unmoved can stand the shock of ages, eternal in the heavens; he cannot anticipate the glorious morn, when he shall meet departed friends, and be clasped once more in the endearing arms of affection.

Yet the atheist enjoys the heaven of happiness, when compared with him who can behold the partner of his sorrows and his joys, who had breathed the last sigh on his bosom, doomed to endure the never ending wrath of an unreconciled God. Such a man could not exist unless the maniac's smile would gleam in room of the fixed and cold visage of despair. But though none can be found who thus believe about their own family, many are willing to lay Calvin's rod without mercy upon their neighbours. They say, "Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the spirit, yet not being *effectually drawn by the Father*, they neither will, nor can truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved; much less can men that receive not the christian religion, be saved, be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of na-

ture and the law of that religion they do profess." Bapt. Conf. p. 25. Let us now leave the chronicles of priestcraft, and search the revealed will of God for an account of the resurrection of man.

It appears that the Apostle had no hope, from the soul surviving the body. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins, then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." How could they perish if the soul could not die? "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept, for since by man came death, by *man* also the resurrection from the dead." Here we have the extent; for as the first fruits were a surety of the gathering in of the harvest, so Christ was a proof of the immortality of men; and as the husbandman who would be satisfied with the first fruits and leave any of the after harvest to perish, would be thought foolish, so we cannot imagine that the great husbandman will suffer any of the family of man to be finally lost.—But how is the resurrection? "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption, it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory, it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power, it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Consequently the only resurrection will be to incorruption, glory, and power. If this is the case, what will become of the wicked? will they not be raised from the dead? "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Now, as every individual of the human family has borne the image of the earthy, we infer from Paul's reasoning, that they also shall bear the image of the heavenly; for, "as in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive. But *every man* (not the righteous only) in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming, then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power," &c. &c. Where now, shall we find the scene so often painted, of children viewing their parents flitting off to the place of torture? where shall we hear the son crying to God, to plunge his mother deeper into hell? where the inmates of heaven rejoicing

at the shrieks of the damned?—perhaps in the traditions of men, *but not in scripture.*

It teaches no future punishment, for "he that is dead, is freed from sin;" and unless we can sin in eternity, we cannot be miserable, for sin and misery are inseparable. But the Apostle has shown we cannot sin, for we shall be raised in glory, &c. As the man sows, so he must reap; but it is as absurd to expect reward or punishment in eternity, for the sins of this life, as it would be for the farmer who sows rye in Pennsylvania, to expect to harvest it in Peru. When our Saviour spoke of the resurrection in answer to the enquirer, he said, "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, *but are as the angels of God in heaven.*" If then they are children of God being children of the resurrection, or as the angels of God, how can they either sin or be miserable?

We have endeavoured to prove, that Jesus rose from the dead. On this we have built the resurrection of men, we have displayed the extent and manner of this change, and have viewed it not as a reward for any deeds of men, but as "the gift of God through Christ Jesus our Lord," and we appeal to scripture for the truth of what is here advanced.

—O—

FROM THE UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE.

"Ye shall not surely die."—Genesis iii. 4.

LETTER TO A CLERGYMAN.

(Concluded from our last.)

I am well aware that it is the party-cant of the day that Universalism is the doctrine the serpent preached to the woman. Enough has already been said, to show that this cant is unjust in the extreme; suffer me, however, to add, that the truth of Universalism depends on the fact that the transgressors did die. Prove that they did not, and Universalism falls to the ground. Surely, it requires no superior penetration to discover this.—The very statement, *Christ will restore all men from sin, misery and death*, cannot be true, unless *death* (the reward of transgression) *passes upon all men.* Or to make still plainer, if possible, what seems to have been an inscrutable mystery with a certain class, Christ could not restore all men from a state of misery and death, unless those men were

in this state. All who are acquainted with the preaching of Universalists, know that they as fully and expressly declare, that men are in that state, as that Christ will restore them from it; and yet they must be accused of supporting the serpent's assertion. They declare to all men, the wages of sin is death; still they must be pursued with the charge of saying, "Ye shall not surely die." It is all in vain to expostulate with bigotry and envy. Innocence cannot protect from their lawless slanders, the voice of truth but rouses them into a rage; and there is no sanctuary too sacred for them to enter and poison with their envenomed breath. If their devoted victim goes to the temple of God, to join with his fellow mortals in worshipping the majesty of heaven, he finds that even there, those relentless furies are not awed into silence. They stand ready to assail him with calumny, in the name of God; to stigmatize his profession; to misrepresent his opinions, till they appear odious; and finally to adjudge him to endless perdition. In vain may he cast his eyes to his christian brethren for relief; their bosoms have caught the indignant spirit, and triumphant scorn lowers through all the house of God. For myself, nothing shall prevent the expression of my horror of that shocking scene of arrogance in our frail nature, where a man, clothed in the profession of meekness and impartial love, enters the sanctuary of the pure Jehovah, and with slander and party invective profanes that solemn hour devoted to heaven alone. I do not accuse you, sir, of all this; perhaps there are extenuating circumstances which either wholly or in part exonerate you. But let us, my brother, never forget the *spirit* of Christ, though we *contend earnestly* for his doctrine. Our Saviour has already received many wounds in the house of his friends. Before I close this letter, permit me to suggest a certain fact, which must check the boldness of the invidious aspersion against Universalism. It may not have been generally perceived, that the doctrine, commonly styled orthodox, as directly teaches that God will not execute what he threatens as did the serpent when he said, "Ye shall not surely die." That doctrine affirms that God threatened Adam, and all mankind in him, with *temporal*,

*spiritual, and eternal death,** for his transgression. But will orthodoxy (so called) admit that all mankind suffer this eternal death? No. After informing us that this is what was threatened, it dispenses with its execution on an innumerable multitude. If this would not tend to a justification of the serpent's assertion, there is no force in language. I am sorry for this unhappy coincidence. I lament too that it has led some to pronounce what is called orthodoxy to be the doctrine preached to Eve. I am satisfied beyond a doubt, that as a system it is far from it; though it must be confessed, the fact now mentioned, gives a suspicious appearance.

Your's in the Gospel of Truth,
B*****

* God said, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." He does not say, thou shalt *eternally* die. Why should theologians add to the sacred word?

POETS' CORNER.

VARIOUS systems men have form'd,
In days of old and modern times;
Religion by their arts adorn'd,
In many lands and many climes.

Turn ye the page of hist'ry o'er,
Learn all the wisdom of the world;
Their present creeds, and those before
Are all in endless error hurl'd.

To bind the God of boundless grace,
Has been the aim of Pharisees;
Arm God against the human race,
Measure and fix his firm decrees

Mad millions in a proud pretence
Of holy worship, heavenly zeal;
Their neighbors burn'd in its defence,
Nor for their sufferings could they feel.

In gods of vile despotic reign,
Vile kings and despots wou'd believe;
Who could delight in *endless pain*,
Nor feel compassion to relieve.

Thus cruel kings and priests were join'd,
And form'd the awful league abhor'd;
With edicts chain'd the human mind,
And shut the kingdom of the Lord.

But, thanks to God! our eyes behold
A light far brighter than the sun;
A day the prophets long foretold,
Of which the ancient poets sung.

His boundless grace doth God reveal,
In Christ the *Head* of ev'ry man;
His grace shall all the nations heal,
This is the gospel's glorious plan.

Christian Messenger.

Philadelphia, Nov. 27, 1819

As R. C. has been appointed, by the proprietors, Editor of the Christian Messenger, that signature will be dropped in future, and what he has to say will be brought in under the editorial remarks; and in this way, remarks, if thought necessary, will be made on each communication in the same paper in which the communication shall appear; which will make it more convenient for the reader, as it will save him the trouble of looking back to other papers to find the piece or pieces under consideration. As heretofore, however, much must be left to the judgment and understanding of the reader; hence, considering that allowances must be made for the particular bias of his own mind, and not considering himself perfect, more than others, much will be passed over in silence, which might meet with some exceptions, were we to read with the eye of a critic in every particular.

We are pleased with the *answer to Z.* and at the same time are disposed to think that Z. meant to establish the same principle, though he was not quite so explicit as to the use of terms.

Whether God *suffers* or *permits* an act to be done by any of his creatures, we conceive it to be the same with God; the only difference is in regard to the creature, and not to the Creator. What God permits is certainly not wrong to perform. But we conceive that God would no more *suffer* a thing to take place which HE did not mean for good than he would *permit* it. T. in his comment on Acts iv. 27, very justly observes, that "this conspiracy had no intention to do the will of God:" neither had they any intention to fulfil the Scriptures, yet we are told, that "they have fulfilled them in condemning him." Acts xiii. 27. If, therefore, God determined that the Scriptures should be *fulfilled*, he determined that *that which fulfilled them should take place*. We agree that this is no excuse, in a moral point of view, to those who did it, as they did it with "*wicked hands*!" If they had received a *permit* from God to crucify Jesus, and had done it in consequence of that *permission*, then they could not have done it with *wicked hands*. To use, therefore, the distinction of T. to which we

do not object, but think it very proper, God *suffered*, not *permitted*, them to be wicked.

The several communications will be kept as much entire as practicable, considering the limits of our paper; and if the work should meet with sufficient encouragement, it will be enlarged after the completion of the first volume, and perhaps put in a different form.

The piece under the signature Z. in this paper, is well written, and cannot be lightly esteemed by any believer in Christ. If it should occur to any one that it is not wholly *original*, he will not think any worse of it on that account. It supports clearly, and conclusively, the main truth on which the Christian religion rests; i. e. the literal, and actual resurrection of Christ. Without the knowledge of this fact, our hope in immortality must be weak indeed. But this fact alone, with the various circumstances attending it, (which must be admitted if this be proved,) is sufficient to establish the truth of the Christian religion, and of course our hope in immortality. "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." 1 Cor. xv. 14.

To the Patrons of the Messenger.

If any of our Subscribers have not been served regularly with the Christian Messenger, they are requested to leave their names, with the numbers wanting, at the office, and they shall be immediately supplied; and strict attention will be paid to that subject in future. The neglect which has been suggested has probably been owing to a change of carriers.

ANECDOTE.

A small, but observing little lad, in the town of Barnard, Vt who having heard his parents say a great many hard things against Universalists, and among the rest, what is so much reported by opposers, that their preachers taught that it is no matter how bad people conduct, by means of very earnest entreaties obtained leave to hear one preach. On his return home his parents asked him how he liked the minister? The child replied, I do not like him at all; I will never hear him again. Why not? asked the parents. The boy replied, You told me he would let me commit as much sin as I pleased, but he says more against sin than our minister does, and I will hear him no more.

—O—
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